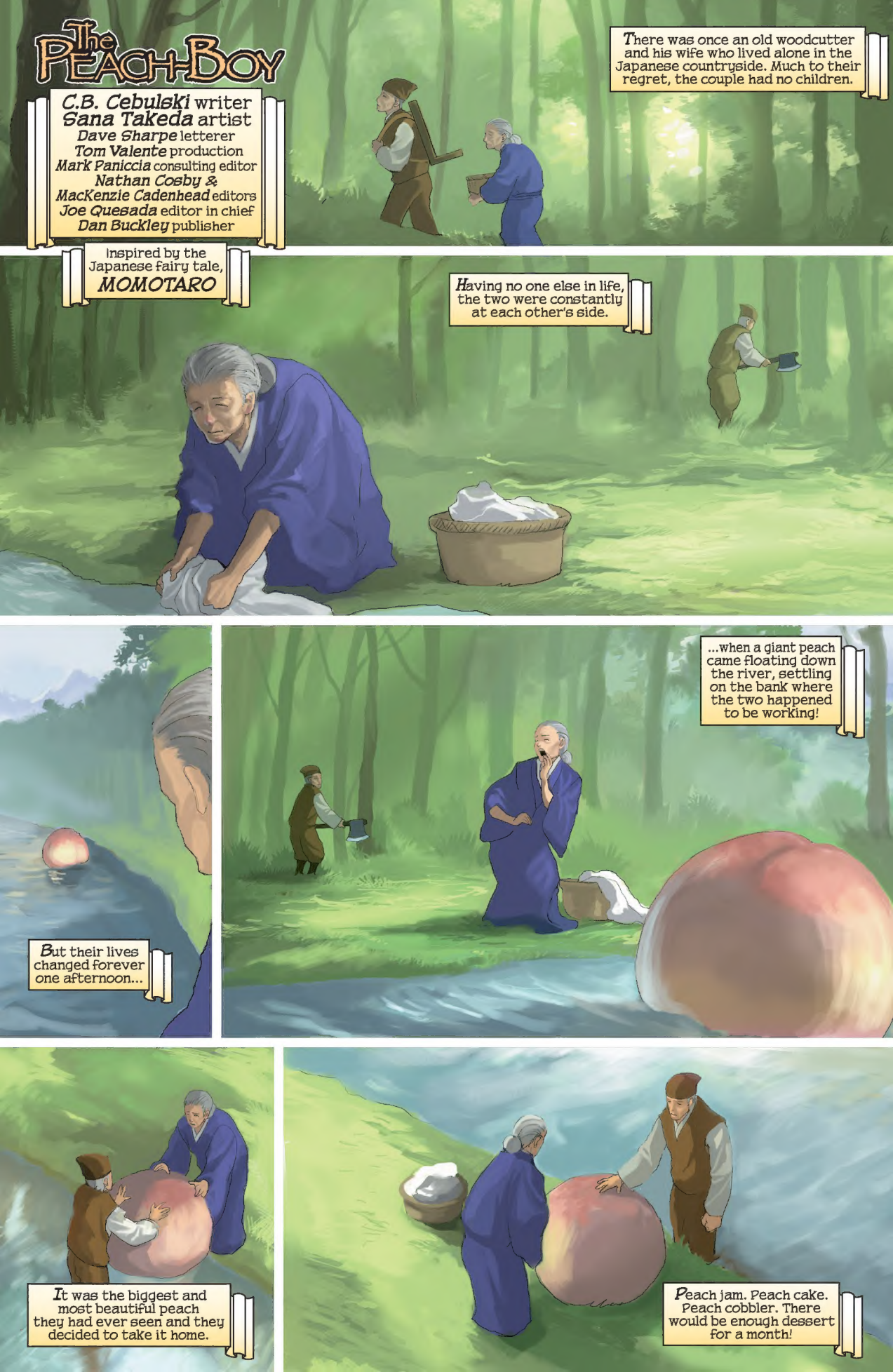
MARVEL
LIMITED SERIES
1 OF 4
CEBULSKI
TAKEDA
X-MEN
FAIRY TALES


The PEACH-BOY
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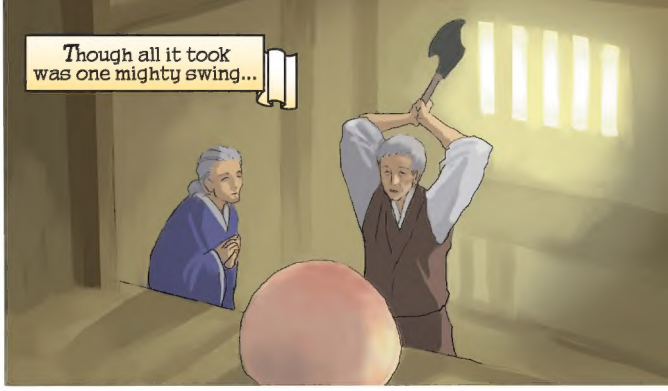
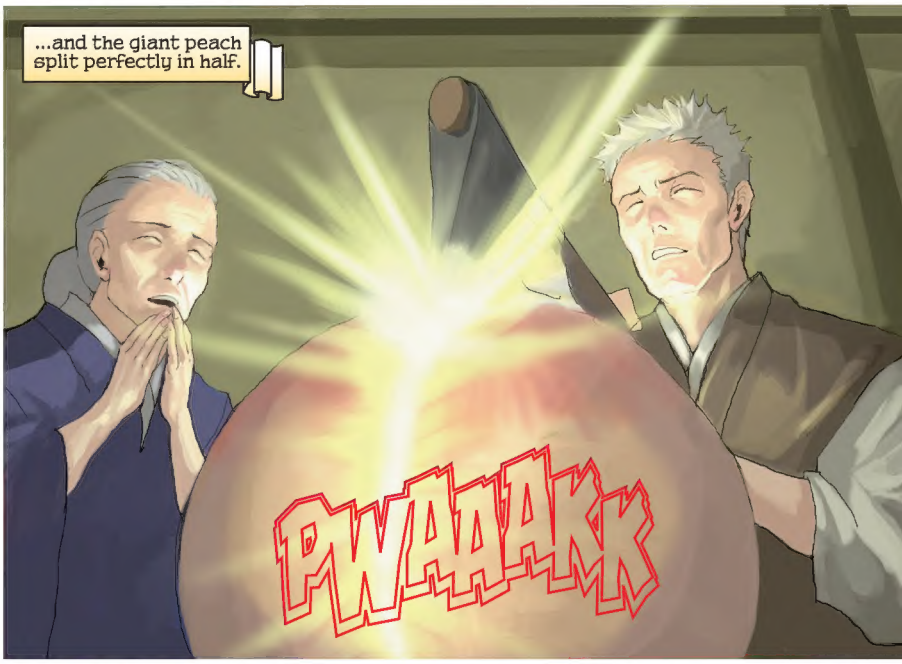
Inspired by the Japanese fairy tale, MOMOTARO
There was once an old woodcutter and his wife who lived alone in the Japanese countryside. Much to their regret, the couple had no children.
Having no one else in life, the two were constantly at each other's side.
But their lives changed forever one afternoon...
...when a giant peach came floating down the river, settling on the bank where the two happened to be working!
It was the biggest and most beautiful peach they had ever seen and they decided to take it home.
Peach jam. Peach cake. Peach cobbler. There would be enough dessert for a month!

Later, having successfully carried the giant peach home, the old woodcutter got his tools to help his wife slice it up.

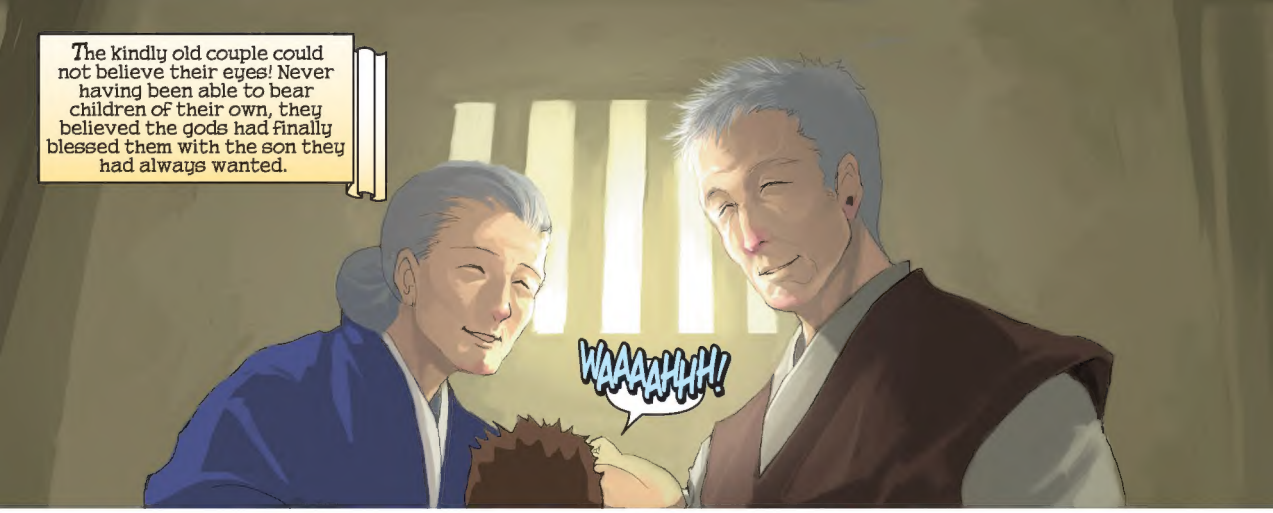

Though all it took was one mighty swing...

KSHINK
SHPWOK

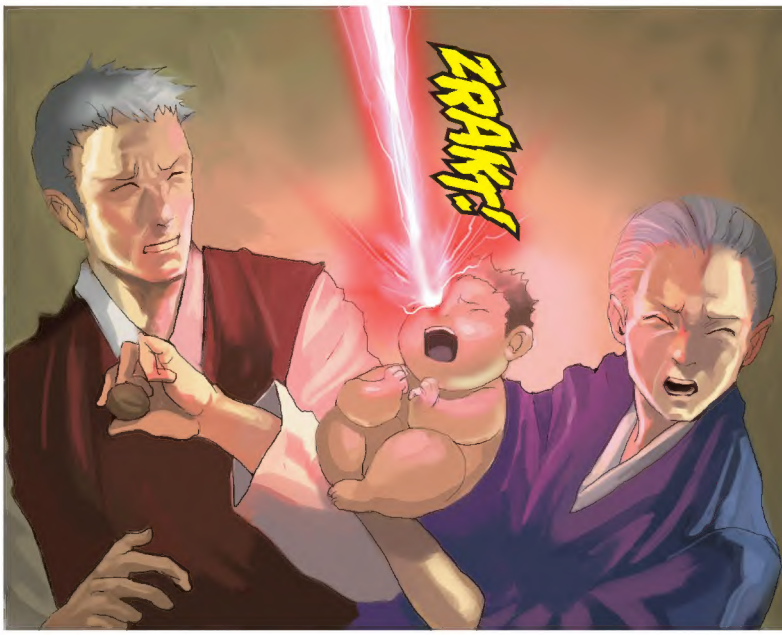

...and the giant peach split perfectly in half.
PWAAAKK

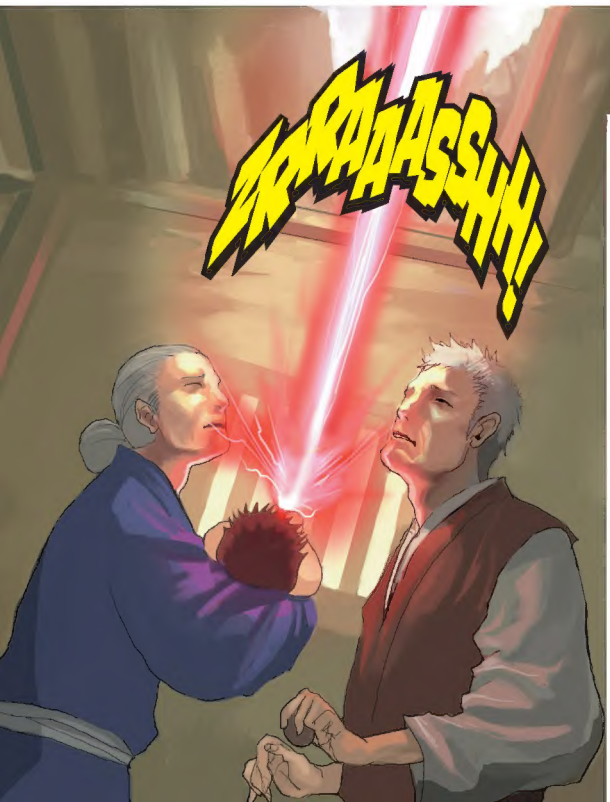
But imagine the old couple's surprise, when the sounds of a crying baby suddenly filled their home.
WAAAAHHH! WAAAAHHH!

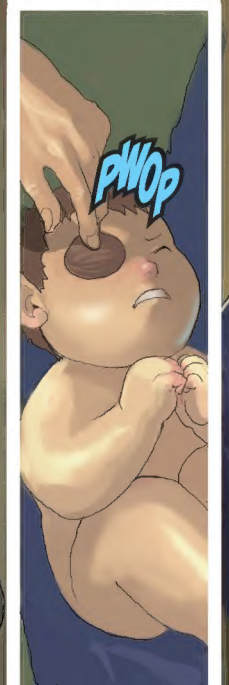
WAAAAHHH!
Maybe the core of nature is the heart of man?

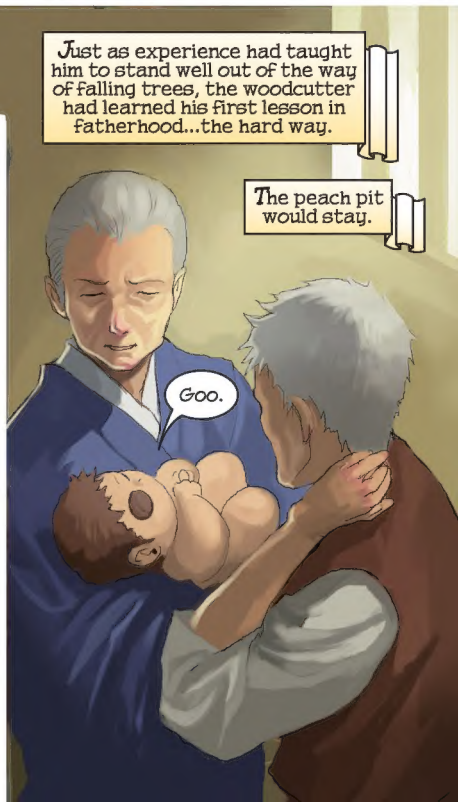

The kindly old couple could not believe their eyes! Never having been able to bear children of their own, they believed the gods had finally blessed them with the son they had always wanted.
WAAAAHHH!

Fearing the peach pit might be irritating the poor baby's eye, the woodcutter reached down to pull it free, when all of a sudden...


CRANK!


KRRRAASHH!


PWOP


Just as experience had taught him to stand well out of the way of falling trees, the woodcutter had learned his first lesson in fatherhood...the hard way.
The peach pit would stay.
Goo.

The couple raised the peach-boy, Hitome, as their own, and as the years passed, he grew to become quite a fine young man.
As his father got older and his strength grew weaker, Hitome followed in his footsteps to become a woodcutter himself, working to provide for his now elderly parents.
ZRAAAAAAAKKTT!
However, Hitome's methods were a little different...and a little faster...than his father's.
And while he lived a peaceful and happy life, much like his parents before his arrival, Hitome was often heavy of heart and found himself feeling lonely.
Until that one fateful day...
Help me!

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Please, help me!
...when Hitome literally ran into someone who would change his life forever.
Get behind me, sir. I'll protect you.
Ha! Just how do you think you're going to fight us, one-eye?!
No weapons?! Easy pickings!
Thank you, thank you. But where are your weapons, son?
Surely a woodcutter must have a blade of some sort?
Don't worry. I don't need weapons.
With a glance, thief.
ZRAKT!
THWOOM

Yaaaaahhh! A demon!
Run!! Before it curses us!!
I'm sorry if I startled you--
Amazing! Simply amazing! So the rumors are true!
All that force contained within your eye...why didn't you attack the scoundrels directly?
Having power does not always mean one has to use it. Now if you'll excuse me...
Yet you choose to use your power for menial labor? All alone in these dark woods?
I prefer to be...by myself.
I've met many people in my days, son, and one thing I know to be certain is that no one remains alone of their own accord.
Tell me, do you live by yourself as well?
No, I live with my parents, in the far woods.
Then I would very much like to meet them. We have much to discuss, you and I...

After the short trek back to Hitome's humble home, the monk revealed he had a tale of his own to tell the one-eyed boy and his parents...
Why do you choose to live so far out in these woods? It must not be easy...
Given my profession, it was always more convenient for us to live out here on our own in the forest, venturing into town when the need arose.
And after learning of Hitome's abilities, the villagers made it clear that they preferred for us to stay as far away from them as possible.
It's shameful. No one need be hated or feared for simply being different. And truth be told, yours is not the first such tale I have heard.
You see, I've actually been looking for gifted souls with abilities like Hitome's.
"I come at the behest of the Emperor himself. For you see, last month, four evil demons invaded his palace and kidnapped his daughter!"
Hhheeeellllppp!
"All the Emperor's attempts to rescue her have been for naught. Every army he sends to fight the demons, no matter how large, is defeated by this evil incarnate."
Which is why we need your help. When rumors of beings with special abilities reached his ears, the Emperor dispatched me to try my best to locate you and others like you.
Now that I've found you, I must ask if you'd be willing to join me, to use your power, to try as best we can to fight the demons and save the Emperor's daughter.
But with me not here to look after them, who will provide for my parents?
The Emperor will personally see to it that they are taken care of.
Mother, Father...
Say no more, son. We've always raised you to do what's right. We understand what you must now do.
You were a gift that blessed our lives from the moment we found you.
Now it's time for you to go out into the world and use your powers to help the lives of others.

Leaving his past behind him, Hitome set out with the monk on what was sure to be an adventure neither would soon forget.
Why do we travel these unkempt paths? Would it not be better for us to stick to the main roads, sir?
Just as I heard of you, young Hitome, so have I heard of other magical creatures who dwell in these woods. It would be in our best interests to have them join us. If we can find them, that is...
OOOWWWWWWW!
What...?!
SNATCH
HEE HEE HEE HEE
You've come looking for magical creatures? Well, you've found one!
I am Aoi, the blue monkey, but I have no interest in joining anyone.
But you have not even heard what we have to offer you!
Seeing as I have the monk's legs you now have even less to offer.
HEE HEE HEE HEE
Then you have no interest in games?
Games?
Yes, I propose a small challenge to test you...to see if you are even worthy of joining us on our quest.
I'm sure I am more than worthy of the likes of you! What sort of challenge?!
I will walk back five paces and place my hands behind my back.
If you are swift enough to pull the peach pit from my eye without me catching you, then we will leave you be.
However, if I am able to touch you, then you will join us on our journey.
That is all? Ha! I accept! Prepare to lose your eye, boy!

ZRAKT!
Now you've learned your first lesson for our impending journey, my blue-furred friend.
One must never underestimate the element of surprise!
Well played, boy, well played. You have my respect for your cunning.
Now please give me a few moments for the pain to dull before I join you...
...and wait for the chance to show you I've got a few surprises of my own.

Joining Hitome and the monk on their journey to save the Emperor's daughter, the blue monkey Aoi guided them deeper into the woods. He knew the pheasant Tenshi lived therein and hoped the bird might be able to help them.
Tenshi is said to possess exceptional strength, however, he refuses to fly again.
Leave me be! You have no right to come up here.
If you fall, it will be to your death as there will be no one to catch you.
It is not I who need be worried, but the stupid human who insisted he come along.
Gentle pheasant, word of your feats has reached our ears, but why do you no longer fly?
When you have flown to the heights I have, you come to realize the higher you go, the further you stand to fall. And falling is something I have no desire to do.
I see. So it is fear that has grounded you?
Come, Aoi, we've wasted our time coming here. I thought we were coming to ask a pheasant to join us on our journey...
...but now I see that the only bird here is a chicken.
How dare you insult me in such a manner?!
Whoooaaa--
Nnoooo!!

I have you, Hitome, but cannot hold on for much longer.
Save yourself, Aoi. Let me go!
YYYYAAAAAHHH!
WHOOOSSHH
Thank you, my feathered friend. If not for your efforts, Aoi and I would have plunged to our doom.
If I didn't know any better, I might think you provoked me and then purposely fell...
And would that have changed anything? By spreading your wings again,you saved our lives. That's what matters and we're forever in your debt.
I must admit, it indeed felt good to put these wings to use again.
There's always the possibility you will fail and fall in life.
But there's also the chance that you can soar to even greater heights by putting your fears behind you.
You seem wise beyond your years, boy. Intriguing...perhaps there's more I might learn if I remain in your company.
I think I may well join you on your journey...if you will have me?
We welcome your wings with open arms, Tenshi. Thank you.

A short time later...
Snow? But how could this be? It's the middle of summer!
Control of the cold is the ability of the one you now seek.
And they say his heart is made of ice as well.
If this Kori has a heart, hopefully a little warmth will help thaw--
The only things that will need thawing...
What?!
...are your friends!
No!
How could you...?!
Kori!
I've always found friends to be more trouble than they're worth!
Man or beast, everyone looks out only for themselves. You'd best trust yourself...and no one else.
I find you humans are usually the worst, always ready to betray those who have placed their faith in you.
It's best you're kept on ice, where you can do little harm.

Such distrust... you've obviously been wronged in the past, and for that I'm sorry.
However, I believe you'll find that lack of faith in one's friends...
...is the last thing mine have to worry about.
ZZRAKKT!
KYRRIIISSSH
You would free your friends before you free yourself?
What kind of friend would I be if I placed my well-being before theirs?
Why not break your own bonds as well?
For I wish to stay here and talk with you.
And why would you want to do that?
Because I think you are in need of a friend, Kori.
Think of friendship as ice. Once it's broken or melts away, it's a hard thing to re-form.
Unless you have the right conditions... then it's easy to start over and make more.
Well put, one-eye. It's been a while since I've warmed to anyone, mistrusting all who have crossed my path.
But as your words have "broken the ice" between us, I'll hear you out.
KRNK
KRNK
KRNK
And speaking of breaking the ice...

With Kori agreeing to join Hitome and his friends, their team was now complete, and the four new allies followed the monk to rescue the Emperor's daughter.
Something much easier said than done, though. Especially where demons are concerned!
The evil in the air here sends a chill up my spine.
Yes, we are approaching the demons' lair.
Let's stand tall and hope these creatures prove more myth than magic.

I hate to disappoint, but I believe you will find we are far from fiction and a force to be feared.

Are there no warriors left to face us? The Emperor has opened the gates of his zoo to save his daughter?
You'll all make fine pets!

ZRRAAKKKT!
THWOOM
FRRRZZSSH
WHAP

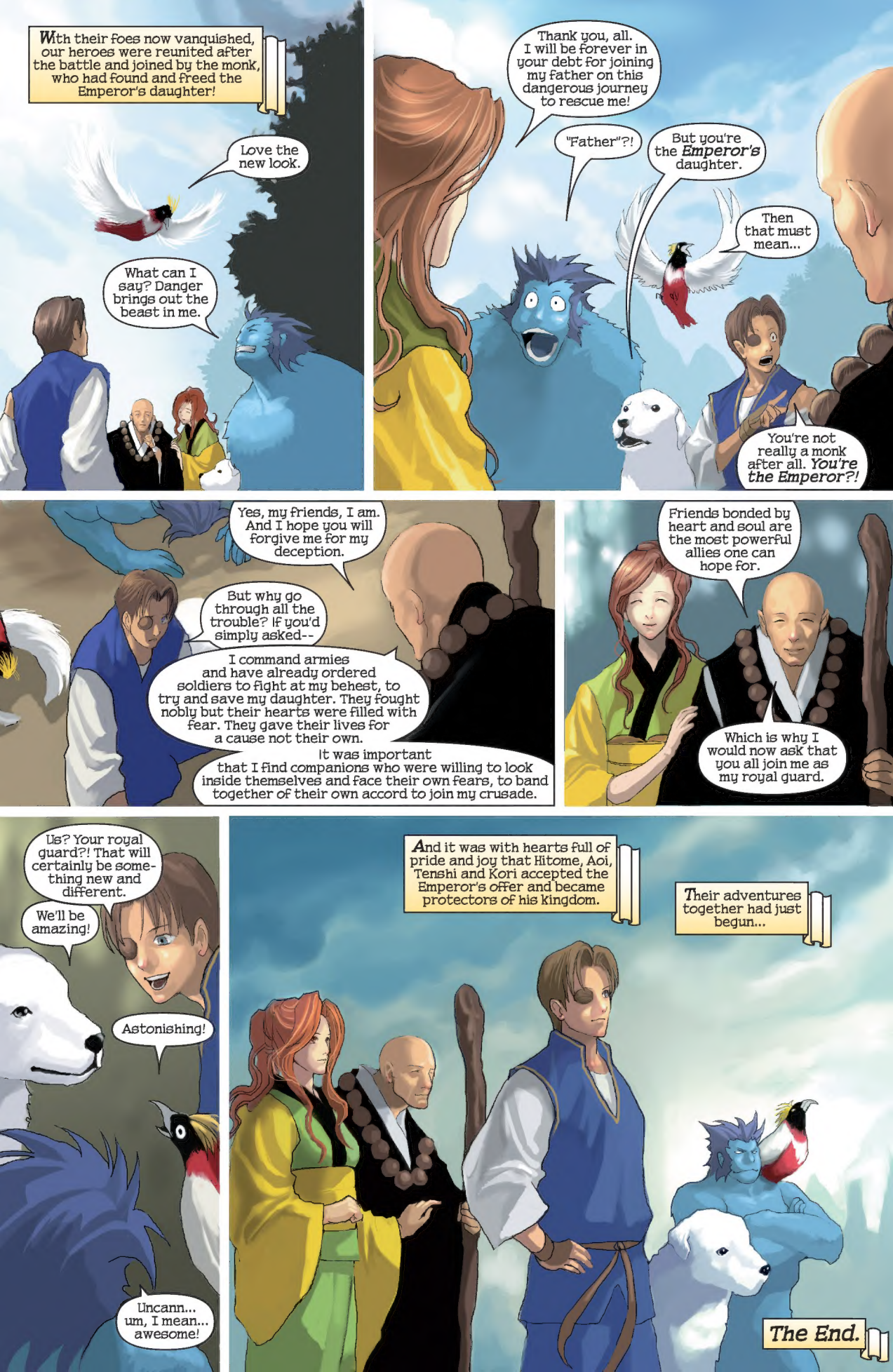
ZRRAAKKT!
WHOOOSSHH
FWWAAASSSH
WWHHRRRRRLLL

ZWAM!
SPLOP
THWUMP
HHHSSSH
It's no use. The demons are too powerful.
We've come on a fool's errand.
Even the monk has fled. We'd best turn tail and run as well...which I still now have, thanks to you, Hitome.
No, he has gone to look for the Emperor's daughter. It's up to us to hold off the demons while he saves her.
But how?
Have you learned nothing on our journey?
Just remember what I've told you...

THWAAPP
Now!
Fly higher than you ever have, Tenshi! Drop the demon to its doom!
I will not fail. I will not fall.
Allow me to handle the flaming female, my friends.
What do you propose to do, Aoi?
You're not the only one with a trick up your sleeve, peach-boy.
FWAASSSHH!
FWAASSSHH!
How's this for an element of surprise?
WHAP

I believe I know a way to defeat the remaining demons. Will you follow my lead, Kori?
Let's send these villains back where they belong!
Head for the woods and freeze the trees!
FFRREEZZHH
ZING
ZING
ZRAKT!
ZING
ZING

Arrgghh!
NO, YOU FOOL!
ZWAAp
WHUMp
=Unnnff!=
FFFWWEEEEEEE
What--?!
FFWWuuMP
FFRRREEZH


With their foes now vanquished, our heroes were reunited after the battle and joined by the monk, who had found and freed the Emperor's daughter!
Love the new look.
What can I say? Danger brings out the beast in me.
Thank you, all. I will be forever in your debt for joining my father on this dangerous journey to rescue me!
"Father"?!
But you're the Emperor's daughter.
Then that must mean...
You're not really a monk after all. You're the Emperor?!
Yes, my friends, I am. And I hope you will forgive me for my deception.
But why go through all the trouble? If you'd simply asked--
I command armies and have already ordered soldiers to fight at my behest, to try and save my daughter. They fought nobly but their hearts were filled with fear. They gave their lives for a cause not their own.
It was important that I find companions who were willing to look inside themselves and face their own fears, to band together of their own accord to join my crusade.
Friends bonded by heart and soul are the most powerful allies one can hope for.
Which is why I would now ask that you all join me as my royal guard.
Us? Your royal guard?! That will certainly be something new and different.
We'll be amazing!
Astonishing!
Uncann... um, I mean... awesome!
And it was with hearts full of pride and joy that Hitome, Aoi, Tenshi and Kori accepted the Emperor's offer and became protectors of his kingdom.
Their adventures together had just begun...
The End.